



TEACHERS' KNOWLEDGE AND PRACTICE OF ACCOMMODATION FOR PUPILS WITH VISUAL IMPAIRMENT IN BASIC SCHOOLS IN OWERRI NORTH LOCAL GOVERNMENT, IMO, NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated teachers' knowledge and practice of accommodation for pupils with visual impairment in basic schools in Owerri North Local Government. The study was carried out to examine the level of basic school teacher's knowledge accommodation strategies for pupils with visual impairment and to ascertain the extent of practice accommodation strategies for pupils with visual impairment. Respondents were 80 basic school teachers selected through convenience sampling. Questionnaire on Accommodation Strategies for Pupils with Visual Impairment (QASPVI) developed and validated by the researcher was used to collect data for the study. Data collected were analyzed using frequency count, percentage, mean and standard deviation. Results show low level of knowledge of accommodation strategies among the respondents as 61.1% of the respondents were not aware of accommodation strategies for persons with visual impairment while 38.9% were aware. It was also found that the level of practice of accommodation strategies for pupils with visual impairment among the respondents was

very low as shown by the weighted average ($X = 1.38$; $SD = 0.484$). The need for regular in-service workshop for basic school teachers on accommodation strategies for pupils with visual impairment in Basic Schools in Owerri North Local Government Area and provision of necessary facility and equipment such as resource room, Braille machine, large print, audiotape, etc. which will enable teachers accommodate pupils with visual impairment in classroom instruction were recommended.

KEYWORDS: Accommodation, Knowledge, Practice, Basic Schools, Visual Impairment.

INTRODUCTION

Education is now recognized and acknowledged by various national and international organizations as a human right.

The statements from the 1994 United Nation for Education, Scientific and Cultural Organization's (UNESCO) conference recognized regular schools with inclusive orientation as the way of tackling discriminatory attitudes, creating

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welcoming communities, building an inclusive society, and achieving education for all. Moreover, the conference provided an effective educative education to the majority of children (UNESCO, 1994). UNESCO (2002) equally advocated for provision of access and participation to persons irrespective of their social, economic and physical limitation. Individuals with visual impairment are present in schools. This statement also emphasized the need to educate all persons together (sighted or with visual impairment) in the same class. The zero-reject principle also prohibits the exclusion of any person from general education (Bruggemann & Friedman, 2017).

From the foregoing therefore, it evident that persons with visual impairment need equal access to education as their sighted peers. Providing the same opportunity to persons with visual impairment may become a herculean task, especially if the regular classroom teachers are not knowledgeable with skills to handle inclusive classroom setting. It can also be daunting tasks if facility, equipment and personnel needed for the education of students with visual impairment are not available. Accommodating students with visual impairment require expertise, facility and equipment. To achieve optimum success in an inclusive primary school environment, accommodating pupils with visual impairment is necessary. If this is not done, learning among pupils with visual impairment will automatically be interrupted (Johnsen, 2001). Research shows that the context in which the learning occurs, inflexible curriculum and inappropriate assessment procedures, are some of the factors leading to ineffective learning among students with visual impairments (Fraser & Maguvhe, 2008).

Inclusive learning environment should be different from the ordinary learning environment, because an inclusive classroom contains students with different learning needs and abilities (Simon et al, 2010). For quality learning of pupils with visual impairments, some accommodations should be adhered to. These include availability and use of large print format for persons with low vision, allocation of more time for test taking, resource room assistance, effective classroom lightening, preferential seating, the use of magnifying classes, and assistive technology such as speech-to-text assistive device (Webster & Roe, 1998; Simon et al, 2010, Olayi 2016). Nigeria is a developing nation yet to fully embrace the idea of inclusive education although a signatory to the convention. In this vein it's important to establish if teachers especially those at

the basic levels of our education have the prerequisite knowledge of accommodation necessary for the inclusion of the visually impaired learners in our schools as well as their levels of practicing accommodation for effective teaching and learning by both teachers and their included learners with visual impairment.

LITERATURE REVIEW

According to Spungin (2002), visual impairment can be defined legally and educationally. Legal definition describes visual impairment by considering the visual acuity of a person. It describes a blind person as the one having visual acuity of 20/200 or less than that, even by using optical devices. This means that; a person with blindness can see an object at 20 feet whereas a sighted person can see at 200 feet. A legal definition considers a person with low vision as having visual acuity of 20/70 meaning that; a person with low vision can see an object at 20 feet whereas a person with normal vision can see at 70 feet (Spungin, 2002). Visual impairment refers to anything that affect vision of an individual which reduces the chances of seeing without glasses students with visual impairment will be not benefit from classroom instruction. In primary schools, students with visual impairment may be on their own if teachers are not aware of their special needs and/or how to meet them. This will lead to poor academic performance among pupils with visual impairment. This makes this study imperative.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The main purpose of this study is to investigate the knowledge and practice of accommodation among teachers of primary schools in Owerri North Local Government. Other objectives of the study are:

- i. To examine the level of basic school teacher's knowledge accommodation strategies for pupils with visual impairment,
- ii. To ascertain the extent of basic school teachers' practice of accommodation strategies for pupils with visual impairment.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Two research questions guided this study. They are:

- i. What is the level of basic school teacher's knowledge of accommodation strategies for pupils with visual impairment?
- iii. What is the extent of basic school teachers' practice of accommodation strategies for pupils with visual impairment?

METHODOLOGY

Descriptive survey was used to conduct this study. Questionnaire on Accommodation Strategies for Pupils with Visual Impairment (QASPVI) developed and validated by the researchers was used to collect data for the study. The population for the study comprises of all primary school teachers in Owerri North Local Government of Imo State. The sample was made up 80 primary school teachers selected using convenient sampling technique from 10 schools in the study area. The questionnaire made

up of 4-likertscale (Strongly Agree – Disagree-Strongly Disagree-Agreed) has two major parts. Section A capture the respondents socio-demographic information such as gender, age and length of service, while Section B focused on on lusting respondents information and disposition to accommodation strategies for teaching pupils with visual impairment including the partially sighted, low vision, and the blind learners. The instrument was personally administered to the teachers who filled and completed it. Data collected were analysed using descriptive statistical tools including simple percentage, mean and standard deviation.

RESULTS**Table 1: Socio-demographic Distribution of the Respondents**

VARIABLE	N	%
GENDER		
Male	31	38.7
Female	49	61.3
Total	79	100
AGE		
18-27	24	30.0
28-37	23	28.8
38-47	29	36.2
48-57	3	3.8
58 & Above	1	1.2
Total	80	100
YEAR OF EXPERIENCE		
1-5	28	35.0
6-10	7	8.7
11-15	14	17.5
16-20	21	26.3
21 & Above	10	12.5
Total	80	100

Source: Field Survey, 2023

Table 1 above shows the demographic distribution of the respondents. It shows that 61.3% of the respondents were female while 38.7% were male. The table further shows that 36.2% of the respondents were within the age range of 38-47 years while 30% were within the age range of 18-

27 years. 35% of the respondents has 1-5 years of experience within while 26.3% of the respondents had 16-20 years of experience. The table therefore shows normal distribution among the gender, age range and varied years of experience.

Table 2: Knowledge of Accommodation Strategies among the Respondents

Accommodation strategies	Aware	%	Not aware	%	Level
1. Assistive technology	16	20.0	64	80	Low
2. Considering for preferred sitting Location	25	31.3	55	68.7	Low
3. Increase in duration for test taking	35	43.8	45	56.2	Low
4. Large print format	10	12.5	70	87.5	Low
5. Magnifying glasses	38	47.5	42	52.5	Low
6. Use of tactile teaching aids	30	37.5	50	62.5	Low
7. Audiotape	64	80	16	20.0	High
Weighted average	31.1	38.9	48.9	61.1	Low

Table 2 above shows the level of knowledge about accommodation strategies among primary school teachers' in the study area. It shows that 80% of the respondents were not aware of the use of assistive technology, 68.7% of the respondents were not aware of the need to consider preferred location for pupils with visual impairment while 56.2% of the respondents were not aware of the need to increase the duration for test taking. The table further shows that 87.5% of the respondents were not aware of the use of

large print of format, 52.5% were not aware of the use of magnifying glasses and 62,5% were not aware of the use of tactile teaching aids for pupils with visual impairment. The table therefore shows that the level of awareness about accommodation strategies for pupils with visual impairment in an inclusive classroom setting is low among the teachers as shown by the weighted average i.e. 38.9% are aware, 61.1% are not aware.

Table 3: Practice of Accommodation Strategies among the Respondents

Statement	N	X	SD	Extent
1. Allow the pupils to use text-to-note	80	1.35	0.480	Low
2. Allow the students to sit in any Location	80	1.41	0.495	Low
3. Recommend magnifying glasses.	80	1.48	0.778	Low
4. Use tactile aids for teaching.	80	1.48	0.779	Low
5. Give additional time for the child will take a test	80	1.46	0.572	Low
6. Ensure the class is well lightened.	80	1.09	0.284	Low
7. Use audiotape	80	1.42	0.510	Low
Weighted average	80	1.38	0.484	Low

Note: X = Mean; SD= Standard Deviation

Table 3 above shows the level of practice of accommodation among the respondents. It shows that the level practice of allowing pupils to use text-to-note technology is low ($X = 1.35$; $SD = 0.480$). It also shows low extent to which the teachers practice allowing students to sit at preferred location ($X = 1.41$; $SD = 0.495$), recommend magnifying glasses ($X = 1.48$; $SD = 0.778$), use tactile instructional aid ($X = 1.49$; $SD = 0.779$), give additional time for test taking ($X = 1.46$; $SD = 0.572$), ensure lightening of the classroom ($X = 1.09$; $SD = 0.284$) and use audiotape ($X = 1.42$; $SD = 0.510$). The weighted average ($X = 1.38$; $SD = 0.484$) shows that the level of practice of accommodation among the teachers is low.

DISCUSSION

The study investigated teachers' knowledge and practice of accommodation for pupils with visual impairment in primary schools in Owerri North Local Government. It was found that the level of teachers' knowledge and level of practice of accommodation strategies for pupils with visual impairment in primary schools were low. This supports that of Webster and Roe, (1998) who reported poor knowledge of accommodation among regular classroom teachers. Omer (2015) also reported low knowledge of accommodation among teachers.

For proper accommodation of students with visual impairment, teachers should have a classroom seating arrangement that enables visually impaired students to avoid glare, too much or too little lighting directed at them, and to seat at an appropriate distance to view materials on the board, use contrasting colors to help low vision students to identify features, and to use large clear, and grammatically correct print on the board (Omer, 2015). The author added that teachers should endeavor to give large and easy to manipulate learning aids to students with visual impairments and to use extensively students' auditory and tactile senses.

It was also found that the practice of accommodation strategies is very low among the teachers. This end credence to that of Biddle (2015) who reported insufficient knowledge and skills among teachers regarding implementation of inclusive teaching and accommodation for students with visual impairments. Another study by Miles (2003) revealed that accommodation for persons with visual impairment is not understood by regular classroom teachers, and as such, they cannot make substantial efforts to accommodate students with visual impairment in the teaching and learning process.

SUMMARY

It was found that the knowledge of accommodation strategies and the level of practice and implementation of such strategies is the very low among regular classroom teachers of Basic Schools in Owerri North Local Government Area.

CONCLUSION/RECOMBINATION

In view of these findings, the following recommendations are necessary:

- i. There should be regular in-service workshop for Basic School teachers on accommodation strategies for pupils with visual impairment in Basic Schools in Owerri North Local Government Area,
- ii. Basic Schools should be provided with necessary facility and equipment
Such as resource room, Braille machine, large print, audiotape, etc. which will
Enable teachers accommodate pupils with visual impairment in classroom
Instruction.

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